

II Samuel

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II Samuel

Chapter 1

After the death of Saul—David had already returned from defeating the Amalekites—David stayed two days in Ziklag.

On the third day, a man came from Saul's camp, with his clothes rent and earth on his head;^a*earth on his head* Another sign of mourning. and as he approached David, he flung himself to the ground and bowed low. David said to him, "Where are you coming from?" He answered, "I have just escaped from the camp of Israel."

"What happened?" asked David. "Tell me!" And he told him how the troops had fled the battlefield, and that, moreover, many of the troops had fallen and died; also that Saul and his son Jonathan were dead.

"How do you know," David asked the young man who brought him the news, "that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?"

The young man who brought him the news answered, "I happened to be at Mount Gilboa, and I saw Saul leaning on his spear, and the chariots and riders closing in on him.

He looked around and saw me, and he called to me. When I responded, 'At your service,'

he asked me, 'Who are you?' And I told him that I was an Amalekite.

Then he said to me, 'Stand over me, and finish me off, for I am in agony and am barely alive.'^b*for I am in agony ... alive* Meaning of Heb. uncertain.

So I stood over him and finished him off, for I knew that he would never rise from where he was lying.^c*he would never rise ... lying* Meaning of Heb. uncertain.

Then I took the crown from his head and the armlet from his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord."

David took hold of his clothes and rent them, and so did all the men with him.

They lamented and wept, and they fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the soldiers of GOD.^d*GOD* Septuagint reads "Judah." and the House of Israel who had fallen by the sword.

David said to the young man who had brought him the news, "Where are you from?" He replied, "I am the son of a resident alien, an Amalekite."

"How did you dare," David said to him, "to lift your hand and kill GOD's anointed?"

Thereupon David called one of the attendants and said to him, "Come over and strike him!" He struck him down and he died.

And David said to him, "Your blood be on your own head! Your own mouth testified against you when you said, 'I put GOD's anointed to death.'"

And David intoned this dirge over Saul and his son Jonathan—

He ordered the Judahites to be taught [The Song of the] Bow.^e
He ordered the Judahites ... Bow Meaning of Heb. uncertain. It is recorded in the Book of Jashar.^f
Book of Jashar See note at Josh. 10.13.
Your glory, O Israel,
Lies slain on your heights;
How have the mighty fallen!
Tell it not in Gath,
Do not proclaim it in the streets of Ashkelon,
Lest the daughters of the Philistine rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult.
O hills of Gilboa—
Let there be no dew or rain on you,
Or bountiful fields,^g
Or bountiful fields Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Emendation yields “springs from the deep” (cf. Ugaritic *shr’thtmt*, and Gen. 7.11; 8.2).
For there the shield of warriors lay rejected,
The shield of Saul,
Polished with oil no more.
From the blood of slain,
From the fat of warriors—
The bow of Jonathan
Never turned back;
The sword of Saul
Never withdrew empty.
Saul and Jonathan,
Beloved and cherished,
Never parted
In life or in death!
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions!
Daughters of Israel,
Weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in crimson and finery,
Who decked your robes with jewels of gold.
How have the mighty fallen
In the thick of battle—
Jonathan, slain on your heights!
I grieve for you,
My brother Jonathan,
You were most dear to me.
Your love was wonderful to me
More than the love of women.
How have the mighty fallen,
The weapons of war^h
weapons of war I.e., Saul and Jonathan.
 perished!

Chapter 2

Sometime afterward, David inquired of GOD, “Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?” GOD answered, “Yes.” David further asked, “Which one shall I go up to?” And GOD replied, “To Hebron.”

So David went up there, along with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail wife of Nabal the Carmelite.

David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in the towns about Hebron.

The people of Judah^a*people of Judah* I.e., their leaders, on the tribe's behalf. came and there they anointed David king over the House of Judah.
David was told about the agents of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul.

So David sent messengers to the people of Jabesh-gilead^b*to the people of Jabesh-gilead* I.e., to their leaders. and said to them, "May you be blessed of GOD because you performed this act of faithfulness to your lord Saul and buried him.

May GOD in turn show you true faithfulness; and I too will reward you generously because you performed this act.

Now take courage and be brave; for your lord Saul is dead and the House of Judah have already anointed me king over them."

But Abner son of Ner, Saul's army commander, had taken Ish-bosheth^c*Ish-bosheth* Meaning "Man of Shame," deliberately altered from Ish-baal, "Man of Baal"; cf. 1 Chron. 8.33; 9.39, and note at 2 Sam. 4.4 on Mephibosheth. son of Saul and brought him across to Mahanaim and made him king over Gilead, the Ashurites,^d*Ashurites* Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Jezreel, Ephraim, and Benjamin—over all Israel.

Ish-bosheth son of Saul was forty years old when he became king of Israel, and he reigned two years. But the House of Judah supported David. The length of time that David reigned in Hebron over the House of Judah was seven years and six months.

Once Abner son of Ner and the soldiers of Ish-bosheth son of Saul marched out from Mahanaim to Gibeon,

and Joab son of Zeruiah and the soldiers of David [also] came out.^e*came out* Septuagint adds "from Hebron." They confronted one another at the pool of Gibeon: one group sat on one side of the pool, and the other group on the other side of the pool.

Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men come forward and sport^f*sport* I.e., engage in single combat. before us." "Yes, let them," Joab answered. They came forward and were counted off, twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth son of Saul, and twelve of David's soldiers.

Each one grasped his opponent's head^g*grasped his opponent's head* Septuagint adds "with his hand." [and thrust] his dagger into his opponent's side; thus they fell together. That place, which is in Gibeon, was called Helkath-hazzurim.^h*Helkath-hazzurim* Meaning perhaps "the Field of the Flints (or Blades)."

A fierce battle ensued that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were routed by David's soldiers.

The three sons of Zeruiahⁱ*Zeruiah* A sister of David, 1 Chron. 2.16. were there—Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Asahel was swift of foot, like a gazelle in the open field.

And Asahel ran after Abner, swerving neither right nor left in his pursuit of Abner.

Abner looked back and shouted, "Is that you, Asahel?" "Yes, it is," he called back.

Abner said to him, "Turn to the right or to the left, and seize one of our boys and strip off his tunic." But Asahel would not leave off. Abner again begged Asahel, "Stop pursuing me, or I'll have to strike you down. How will I look your brother Joab in the face?"

When he refused to desist, Abner struck him in the belly with a backward thrust^j*a backward thrust Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i> of his spear and the spear protruded from his back. He fell there and died on the spot. And all who came to the place where Asahel fell and died halted; but Joab and Abishai continued to pursue Abner. And the sun was setting as they reached the hill of Ammah, which faces Giah on the road to the wilderness of Gibeon.^k*which faces Giah ... Gibeon Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i>**

The Benjaminites rallied behind Abner, forming a single company; and they took up a position on the top of a hill.

Abner then called out to Joab, "Must the sword devour forever? You know how bitterly it's going to end! How long will you delay ordering your troops to stop the pursuit of their own kindred?"

And Joab replied, "As God lives, if you hadn't spoken up, the troops would have given up the pursuit of their kindred only the next morning."^l*if you hadn't spoken up ... the next morning Emendation yields "If you had only spoken up, the troops would already have given up the pursuit of their kinsmen this morning."</i>*

Joab then sounded the horn, and all the troops halted; they ceased their pursuit of Israel and stopped the fighting.

Abner and his men marched through the Arabah all that night and, after crossing the Jordan, they marched through all of Bithron^m*through all of Bithron Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i> until they came to Mahanaim. After Joab gave up the pursuit of Abner, he assembled all the troops and found nineteen of David's soldiers missing, besides Asahel.*

David's soldiers, on the other hand, defeated the Benjaminites and the men under Abner and killed three hundred and sixty of them.ⁿ*defeated the Benjaminites ... three hundred and sixty of them Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i>*

They bore Asahel away and buried him in his father's tomb in Bethlehem. Then Joab and his men marched all night; day broke upon them in Hebron.

Chapter 3

The war between the House of Saul and the House of David was long-drawn-out; but David kept growing stronger, while the House of Saul grew weaker.

^a*The list of David's wives and sons in vv. 2-5 differs somewhat from the parallel list in 1 Chron. 3.1-3. The narrative in v. 1 is resumed in v. 6.</i> Sons were born to David in Hebron: His first-born was Amnon, by Ahinoam of Jezreel;*

his second was Chileab, by Abigail wife of Nabal the Carmelite; the third was Absalom son of Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur; the fourth was Adonijah son of Haggith; the fifth was Shephatiah son of Abital;

and the sixth was Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.

During the war between the House of Saul and the House of David, Abner supported the House of Saul.

Now Saul had a concubine named Rizpah, daughter of Aiah; and [Ish-bosheth] said to Abner, "Why have you lain with my father's concubine?" Abner was very upset by what Ish-bosheth said, and he replied, "Am I a dog's head from Judah?"^b from Judah Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Here I have been loyally serving the House of your father Saul and his kin and friends, and I have not betrayed you into the hands of David; yet this day—over this woman—you reproach me!

May God do thus and more to Abner if I do not do for David as GOD swore to him—

to transfer the kingship from the House of Saul, and to establish the throne of David over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beer-sheba."

[Ish-bosheth] could say nothing more in reply to Abner, because he was afraid of him.

Abner immediately^c immediately Meaning of Heb. uncertain. sent messengers to David, saying, "To whom shall the land belong?" and to say [further],^d "To whom shall the land belong?" and to say [further] Meaning of Heb. uncertain. "Make a pact with me, and I will help you and bring all Israel over to your side."

He replied, "Good; I will make a pact with you. But I make one demand upon you: Do not appear before me unless you bring Michal daughter of Saul when you come before me."

David also sent messengers to Ish-bosheth son of Saul, to say, "Give me my wife Michal, for whom I paid the bride-price^e bride-price Cf. Exod. 22.15; Deut. 20.7; 22.23-29. of one hundred Philistine foreskins."^f one hundred Philistine foreskins Cf. 1 Sam. 18.27 (where the number is given as "two hundred").

So Ish-bosheth sent and had her taken away from [her] husband,^g [her] husband As in the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Targum. Or "the other man involved." Cf. 1 Sam. 25.44. Paltiel son of Laish.

Her husband walked with her as far as Bahurim, weeping as he followed her; then Abner ordered him to turn back, and he went back.

Abner had conferred with the elders of Israel, saying, "You have wanted David to be king over you all along.

Now act! For GOD has said concerning David: I will deliver^h I will deliver So many mss. and versions; most mss. and editions have "[God] has delivered." My people Israel from the hands of the Philistines and all its other enemies through My servant David."

Abner also talked with the Benjaminites; then Abner went and informed David in Hebron of all the wishes of Israel and of the whole House of Benjamin.

When Abner came to David in Hebron, accompanied by twenty men, David made a feast for Abner and the men with him.

Abner said to David, "Now I will go and rally all Israel to Your Majesty. They will make a pact with you, and you can reign over all that your heart desires." And David dismissed Abner, who went away unharmed.

Just then David's soldiers and Joab returned from a raid, bringing much plunder with them; Abner was no longer with David in Hebron, for he had been dismissed and had gone away unharmed.

When Joab and the whole force with him arrived, Joab was told that Abner son of Ner had come to the king, had been dismissed by him, and had gone away unharmed.

Joab went to the king and said, "What have you done? Here Abner came to you; why did you let him go? Now he has gotten away!"

Don't you know that Abner son of Ner came only to deceive you, to learn your comings and goings and to find out all that you are planning?" Joab left David and sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the cistern of Sirah; but David knew nothing about it. When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside within the gate to talk to him privately;ⁱ*privately* Meaning of Heb. uncertain. there he struck him in the belly. Thus [Abner] died for shedding the blood of Asahel, Joab's^j*Joab's* Heb. "his." brother. Afterward, when David heard of it, he said, "Both I and my kingdom are forever innocent before GOD of shedding the blood of Abner son of Ner. May [the guilt] fall upon the head of Joab and all his father's house. May the house of Joab never be without someone suffering from a discharge or an eruption, or a male who handles the spindle,^k*a male who handles the spindle* I.e., doing only what would have been viewed as women's work. or one slain by the sword, or one lacking bread."— Now Joab and his brother Abishai had killed Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel during the battle at Gibeon.— David then ordered Joab and all the troops with him to rend their clothes, gird on sackcloth, and make lament before Abner;^l*before Abner* I.e., in the procession for Abner. and King David himself walked behind the bier. And so they buried Abner at Hebron; the king wept aloud by Abner's grave, and all the troops wept. And the king intoned this dirge over Abner,
Should Abner have died the death of a churl?
Your hands were not bound,
Your feet were not put in fetters;
But you fell as one falls
Before treacherous men!
And all the troops continued to weep over him. All the troops came to urge David to eat something while it was still day; but David swore, "May God do thus to me and more if I eat bread or anything else before sundown." All the troops took note of it^m*took note of it* Meaning of Heb. uncertain. and approved, just as all the troops approved everything else the king did.ⁿ*just as ...* king did Meaning of Heb. uncertain. That day all the troops and all Israel knew that it was not by the king's will that Abner son of Ner was killed. And the king said to his soldiers, "You well know that a prince, a great man in Israel, has fallen this day. And today I am weak, even though anointed king; those involved, the sons of Zeruah, are too savage for me. May GOD requite the wicked for their wickedness!"

Chapter 4

When [Ish-bosheth] son of Saul heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost heart^a*he lost heart* Lit. "his hands weakened"; and so frequently. and all Israel was alarmed. The son of Saul [had] two company commanders, one named Baanah and the other Rechab, sons of Rimmon the Beerothite—Benjaminites, since Beeroth too was considered part of Benjamin.

The Beerothites had fled to Gittaim,^{class="footnote-marker">b}*class="footnote">Gittaim Gittaim was likewise in Benjamin; cf. Neh. 11.31ff.</i> where they have sojourned to this day. (Jonathan son of Saul had a son whose feet were crippled. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse picked him up and fled; but as she was fleeing in haste, he fell and was lamed. His name was Mephibosheth.^c<i class="footnote">Mephibosheth The original form of the name, Merib-baal, is preserved in 1 Chron. 8.34; 9.40. Cf. note at 2.8 on Ish-bosheth. This subject is resumed in chapter 9.</i>)*</sup>

Rechab and Baanah, sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, started out, and they reached the home of Ish-bosheth at the heat of the day, when he was taking his midday rest.

So they went inside the house, as though fetching wheat, and struck him in the belly.^d<i class="footnote">So they went inside ... in the belly Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Septuagint reads, "And behold, the woman who kept the door of the house was cleaning wheat. She became drowsy and fell asleep."</i> Rechab and his brother Baanah slipped by, and entered the house while he was asleep on his bed in his bedchamber; and they stabbed him to death. They cut off his head and took his head and made their way all night through the Arabah. They brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David in Hebron. "Here," they said to the king, "is the head of your enemy, Ish-bosheth son of Saul, who sought your life. This day GOD has avenged my lord the king upon Saul and his offspring."

But David answered Rechab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, "As GOD lives, who has rescued me from every trouble:

The one who told me in Ziklag that Saul was dead thought he was bringing good news. But instead of rewarding him for the news, I seized and killed him.

How much more, then, when wicked men have killed an innocent man in bed in his own house! I will certainly avenge his blood on you, and I will rid the earth of you."

David gave orders to the young men, who killed them; they cut off their hands and feet and hung them up by the pool in Hebron. And they took the head of Ish-bosheth and buried it in the grave of Abner at Hebron.

Chapter 5

^{class="footnote-marker">a}<i class="footnote">The account in vv. 1-3 and 6-10 is to be found also, with variations, in 1 Chron. 11.1-9.</i> All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "We are your own flesh and blood.</sup>

Long before now, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led Israel in war;^b<i class="footnote">led Israel in war Lit. "led Israel out and in."</i> and GOD said to you: You shall shepherd My people Israel; you shall be ruler of Israel."

All the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a pact with them in Hebron before GOD. And they anointed David king over Israel.

David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years.

In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years. The king and his men set out for Jerusalem against the Jebusites who inhabited the region. David was told, "You will never get in here! Even the blind and the lame will turn you back." (They meant: David will never

enter here.)^c*Even the blind ... enter here* Meaning of Heb. uncertain.

But David captured the stronghold of Zion; it is now the City of David. On that occasion David said, "Those who attack the Jebusites shall reach the water channel and [strike down] the lame and the blind, who are hateful to David." That is why they say: "No one who is blind or lame may enter the House."^d*shall reach the water channel ... That is why they say ... House* Meaning of Heb. uncertain.

David occupied the stronghold and renamed it the City of David; David also fortified the surrounding area, from the Millo^e*Millo* A citadel. inward. David kept growing stronger, for the ETERNAL, the God of Hosts, was with him.

^f*The account in vv. 11-25 is to be found also, with variations, in 1 Chron. 14.1-16.* King Hiram of Tyre sent envoys to David with cedar logs, carpenters, and stonemasons; and they built a palace for David.

Thus David knew that GOD had established him as king over Israel and had exalted his kingship for the sake of Israel—God's people. After he left Hebron, David took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem, and more sons and daughters were born to David.

These are the names of the children born to him in Jerusalem:^g*These are the names ... Jerusalem* This list is found, in addition to 1 Chron. 14.4-7, in 1 Chron. 3.5-8, with variations. Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon; Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, and Japhia; Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

^h*Verses 17-25 continue the narrative of v. 3.* When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, the Philistines marched up in search of David; but David heard of it, and he went down to the fastness.ⁱ*fastness* Probably the stronghold of Adullam (cf. 1 Sam. 22.4-5). The Philistines came and spread out over the Valley of Rephaim. David inquired of GOD, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hands?" And GOD answered David, "Go up, and I will deliver the Philistines into your hands."

Thereupon David marched to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. And he said, "GOD has broken through my enemies before me as waters break through [a dam]." That is why that place was named Baal-perazim.^j*Baal-perazim* Interpreted as "Baal of Breaches." Cf. 6.8 below, and the name Perez in Gen. 38.29 and note.

The Philistines abandoned their idols there, and David and his men carried them off.

Once again the Philistines marched up and spread out over the Valley of Rephaim.

David inquired of GOD, who answered, "Do not go up, but circle around behind them and confront them at the *baca* ^k*baca* Meaning of Heb. uncertain." trees.

And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the *baca* trees, then go into action, for GOD will be going in front of you to attack the Philistine forces."

David did as GOD had commanded him; and he routed the Philistines from Geba all the way to Gezer.

Chapter 6

David again assembled all the best soldiers in Israel, thirty thousand strong.

^a*Verses 2-12 are found also in 1 Chron. 13.5-14, with variations.* Then David and all the troops that were with him set out from Baalim^b*Baalim* Identical with Baalah, another name for Kiriath-jearim, where the Ark had been kept (cf. 1 Sam. 6.21; 1 Chron. 13.6; Josh. 15.9).^c*of Judah to bring up from there the Ark of God to which the Name was attached, the name GOD of Hosts Enthroned on the Cherubim.*

They loaded the Ark of God onto a new cart and conveyed it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Abinadab's sons, Uzza and Ahio, guided the new cart.

They conveyed it from Abinadab's house on the hill, [Uzza walking]^c*[Uzza walking]* Cf. vv. 6-7.^d*alongside* new cart ... alongside^d*Septuagint and 4QSam^a read "cart alongside."* the Ark of God and Ahio walking in front of the Ark.

Meanwhile, David and all the House of Israel danced before GOD to [the sound of] all kinds of cypress wood [instruments],^e*[the sound of ... instruments]* Cf. Kimhi; the parallel passage 1 Chron. 13.8 reads "with all their might and with songs."^f*with lyres, harps, hand-drums, sistrums, and cymbals.* But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out for the Ark of God and grasped it, for the oxen had stumbled.^f*stumbled* Meaning of Heb. uncertain.^g

GOD was incensed at Uzzah. And God struck him down on the spot for his indiscretion,^g*for his indiscretion* So Targum; 1 Chron. 13.10 reads "because he had laid a hand on the Ark."^h*and he died there beside the Ark of God.*

David was distressed because GOD had inflicted a breach upon Uzzah; and that place was named Perez-uzzah,^h*Perez-uzzah* I.e., "the Breach of Uzzah"; cf. 5.20 and note.ⁱ*as it is still called.*

David was afraid of GOD that day; he said, "How can I let the Ark of GOD come to me?"

So David would not bring the Ark of GOD to his place in the City of David; instead, David diverted it to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.

The Ark of GOD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months, and GOD blessed Obed-edom and his whole household.

It was reported to King David: "GOD has blessed Obed-edom's house and all that belongs to him because of the Ark of God."ⁱ^j*Vv. 12b-14 are found, with variations, in 1 Chron. 15.25-27; vv. 15-19a, with variations, in 1 Chron. 15.28-16.3; vv. 19b-20a, with variations, in 1 Chron. 16.43.* Thereupon David went and brought up the Ark from the house of Obed-edom to the City of David, amid rejoicing.

When the bearers of the Ark of GOD had moved forward six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling.^j*an ox and a fatling* 4QSam^a reads "seven oxen and seven [rams]"; cf. 1 Chron. 15.26.^k

David whirled with all his might before GOD; David was girt with a linen ephod. Thus David and all the House of Israel brought up the Ark of GOD with shouts and with blasts of the horn. As the Ark of GOD entered the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and whirling before GOD; and she despised him for it. They brought in the Ark of GOD and set it up in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before GOD. When David finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of GOD of Hosts. And he distributed among all the people—the entire multitude of Israel, man and woman alike—to each a loaf of bread, a cake made in a pan, and a raisin cake.^k*cake made in a pan...raisin cake* Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Then all the people left for their homes. David went home to greet his household. And Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, “Didn’t the king of Israel do himself honor today—exposing himself today in the sight of the maidservants of his subjects, as one of the riffraff might expose himself!” David answered Michal, “It was before GOD—who chose me instead of your father and all his family and appointed me ruler over Israel, GOD’s people! I will dance before GOD and dishonor myself even more, and be low in my own^l*my own* Septuagint reads “your.” esteem; but among the maidservants that you speak of I will be honored.” So to her dying day Michal daughter of Saul had no children.

Chapter 7

^a*This chapter is found, with variations, also in 1 Chron. 17.* When the king was settled in his palace and GOD had granted him safety from all the enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan: “Here I am dwelling in a house of cedar, while the Ark of GOD abides in a tent!” Nathan said to the king, “Go and do whatever you have in mind, for GOD is with you.” But that same night the word of GOD came to Nathan: “Go and say to My servant David: Thus said GOD: Are you the one to build a house for Me to dwell in? From the day that I brought the people of Israel out of Egypt to this day I have not dwelt in a house, but have moved about in Tent and Tabernacle. As I moved about wherever the Israelites went, did I ever reproach any of the tribal leaders^b*leaders* Understanding *shibṭe* as “scepters”; so Kimhi. 1 Chron. 17.6 reads “chieftains”; cf. below, v. 11. whom I appointed to care for My people Israel: Why have you not built Me a house of cedar? “Further, say thus to My servant David: Thus said GOD of Hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be ruler of My people Israel, and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut down all your enemies before you. Moreover, I will give you great renown like that of the greatest men on earth.

I will establish a home for My people Israel and will plant them firm, so that they shall dwell secure and shall tremble no more. Iniquitous people shall not oppress them anymore as in the past, ever since I appointed chieftains over My people Israel. I will give you safety from all your enemies.
"G<small>OD</small> declares to you:

G<small>OD</small> will establish a house^c<i class="footnote">house I.e., a dynasty; play on "house" (i.e., temple) in v. 5.</i> for you—

When your days are done and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own issue, and I will establish his kingship.

He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish his royal throne forever.

I will be a father to him,^d<i class="footnote">I will be a father to him I.e., I will provide protection and guidance, while expecting loyalty in return.</i>
And he shall be

a son to Me.
When he does wrong,
I will chastise

him
With the rod of mortals
And the blows of

humankind.^e<i class="footnote">With the rod of mortals / And the blows of humankind

I.e., as a human father chastises a wayward son. Or "With the scepter of [hostile] parties and the afflictions of mortals," i.e., respectively, foreign adversaries and disease.</i>

"But I will never withdraw My favor from him as I withdrew it from Saul, whom I removed to make room for you.<sup class="footnote-

marker">f</sup><i class="footnote">to make room for you Lit. "from before you."</i>

Your house and your kingship shall ever be secure before you;<sup

class="footnote-marker">g</sup><i class="footnote">before you

Septuagint reads "before Me," i.e., "by My favor."</i> your throne shall be established forever."

Nathan spoke to David in accordance with all these words and all this prophecy.

Then King David came and sat before G<small>OD</small>, and he said,

"What am I, O Sovereign G<small>OD</small>, and what is my family, that You have brought me thus far?

Yet even this, O Sovereign G<small>OD</small>, has seemed too little to You; for You have spoken of Your servant's house also for the future. May that be the law for the people,^h<i class="footnote">May that be the law for the people Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i> O Sovereign G<small>OD</small>.

What more can David say to You? You know Your servant, O Sovereign G<small>OD</small>.

For Your word's sake and of Your own accord<sup class="footnote-

marker">i</sup><i class="footnote">For Your word's sake ... accord

Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i> You have wrought this great thing, and made it known to Your servant.

You are great indeed, O Sovereign G<small>OD</small>! There is none like You and there is no other God but You, as we have always heard.

And who is like Your people Israel, a unique nation on earth, whom God went and redeemed as a covenanted people, thus winning renown and doing great and marvelous deeds for them^j<i class="footnote">them Heb. "you," apparently denoting Israel.</i>

[and] for Your land—[driving out]^k<i class="footnote">[driving out] So 1 Chron. 17.21.</i> nations and their gods before Your people, whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt.

You have established Your people Israel as Your very own people forever; and You, O ETERNAL One, have become their God. "And now, O ETERNAL God, fulfill Your promise to Your servant and his house forever; and do as You have promised. And may Your name be glorified forever, in that men will say, 'GOD of Hosts is God over Israel'; and may the house of Your servant David be established before You. Because You, O GOD of Hosts, the God of Israel, have revealed to Your servant that You will build a house for him, Your servant has ventured to offer this prayer to You. And now, O Sovereign GOD, You are God and Your words will surely come true, and You have made this gracious promise to Your servant. Be pleased, therefore, to bless Your servant's house, that it abide before You forever; for You, O Sovereign GOD, have spoken. May Your servant's house be blessed forever by Your blessing."

Chapter 8

^a*This chapter is reproduced, with some variations, in 1 Chron. 18.* Sometime afterward, David attacked the Philistines and subdued them; and David took Metheg-ammah^b*Metheg-ammah* If not a place name, meaning of Heb. uncertain. from the Philistines.

He also defeated the Moabites. He made them lie down on the ground and he measured them off with a cord; he measured out two lengths of cord for those who were to be put to death, and one length for those to be spared.^c*two lengths ... death, and one length ... spared* I.e., he repeatedly doomed twice the number he spared. And the Moabites became tributary vassals of David.

David defeated Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah, who was then on his way to restore his monument^d*monument* On *yad* in this sense, cf. 18.18; 1 Chron. 18.3; 1 Sam. 15.12. In contrast to others "dominion." at the Euphrates River.

David captured 1,700 charioteers and 20,000 foot soldiers of his force; and David hamstrung all the chariot horses, except for 100 that he retained.

And when the Arameans of Damascus came to the aid of King Hadadezer of Zobah, David struck down 22,000 of the Arameans.

David stationed garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Arameans became tributary vassals of David. GOD gave David victory wherever he went.

David took the gold shields^e*shields* Or "quivers." carried by Hadadezer's retinue and brought them to Jerusalem; and from Betah and Berothai, towns of Hadadezer, King David took a vast amount of copper.

When King Toi of Hamath heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer,

Toi sent his son Joram to King David to greet him and to congratulate him on his military victory over Hadadezer—for Hadadezer had been at war with Toi. [Joram] brought with him objects of silver, gold, and copper.

King David dedicated these to GOD, along with the other silver and gold that he dedicated, [taken] from all the nations he had conquered:

from Edom,^f*Edom* So several mss., Septuagint, and 1 Chron. 18.11-13; and cf. v. 14

below. Printed editions and most mss. read "Aram." Moab, and Ammon; from the Philistines and the Amalekites, and from the plunder of Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

David gained fame when he returned from defeating^g when he returned from defeating Cf. 1 Chron. 18.12 and Ps. 60.1, which read differently. Edom,^h Edom See note at v. 12. in the Valley of Salt, 18,000 in all. He stationed garrisons in Edom—he stationed garrisons in all of Edomⁱ he stationed garrisons in all of Edom This phrase is lacking in 1 Chron. 18.13.—and all the Edomites became vassals of David.

GOD gave David victory wherever he went.

David reigned over all Israel, and David executed true justice among all his people.

Joab son of Zeruiah was commander of the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder;

Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar^j Ahimelech son of Abiathar Emendation yields "Abiathar son of Ahimelech," cf., e.g., 20.25; 1 Sam. 22.20. were priests; Seraiah^k Seraiah "Sheva" in 20.25; "Shavsha" in 1 Chron. 18.16. was scribe;

Benaiah son of Jehoiada was commander of^l commander of So Targum (cf. 20.23; 1 Chron. 18.17); Heb. "and." the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were priests.

Chapter 9

David inquired, "Is there anyone still left of the House of Saul with whom I can keep faith for the sake of Jonathan?"

There was a servant of the House of Saul named Ziba, and they summoned him to David. "Are you Ziba?" the king asked him. "Yes, sir,"^a Yes, sir Lit. "Your servant is." he replied.

The king continued, "Is there any member of the House of Saul left with whom I can keep faith as pledged before God?"^b as pledged before God See 1 Sam. 20.14 and note. Ziba answered the king, "Yes, there is still a son of Jonathan whose feet are crippled."

"Where is he?" the king asked, and Ziba said to the king, "He is in the house of Machir son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar."

King David had him brought from the house of Machir son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar;

and when Mephibosheth son of Jonathan son of Saul came to David, he flung himself on his face and prostrated himself. David said, "Mephibosheth!" and he replied, "At your service, sir."

David said to him, "Don't be afraid, for I will keep faith with you for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will give you back all the land of your grandfather Saul; moreover, you shall always eat at my table."

[Mephibosheth] prostrated himself again, and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog like me?"

The king summoned Ziba, Saul's steward, and said to him, "I give to your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and to his entire family.

You and your sons and your slaves shall farm the land for him and shall bring in [its yield] to provide food for your master's grandson^c grandson Septuagint reads "household." to live on; but Mephibosheth, your

master's grandson, shall always eat at my table."—Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty slaves.—

Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do just as my lord the king has commanded him." "Mephibosheth shall eat at my table"^d*class="footnote">Mephibosheth shall eat at my table*
Septuagint reads "And Mephibosheth ate at David's table."*</i> like one of the king's sons."*

Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica; and all the members of Ziba's household worked for Mephibosheth.

Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate regularly at the king's table. He was lame in both feet.

Chapter 10

^a*class="footnote">This chapter is found also in 1 Chron. 19.</i> Sometime afterward, the king of Ammon died, and his son Hanun succeeded him as king.*

David said, "I will keep faith with Hanun son of Nahash, just as his father kept faith with me." He sent his courtiers with a message of condolence to him over his father. But when David's courtiers came to the land of Ammon,

the Ammonite officials said to their lord Hanun, "Do you think David is really honoring your father just because he sent you consolers? Why, David has sent his courtiers to you to explore and spy out the city, and to overthrow"^b*class="footnote">overthrow Emendation yields "reconnoiter"; cf. Deut. 1.22; Josh. 2.2-3.</i> it."*

So Hanun seized David's courtiers, clipped off one side of their beards and cut away half of their garments at the buttocks, and sent them off. When David was told about the men,^c*class="footnote">the men Moved up from later in the verse for clarity.</i> he dispatched others to meet them, for they were greatly embarrassed. And the king gave orders: "Stop in Jericho until your beards grow back; then you can return."*

The Ammonites realized that they had incurred the wrath of^d*class="footnote">incurred the wrath of See note at 1 Sam. 13.4.</i> David. So the Ammonites sent agents and hired Arameans of Beth-rehob and Arameans of Zobah—20,000 foot soldiers—and the king of Maacah [with both his] 1,000 men and Tob's^e*class="footnote">Tob's I.e., from the region called Tob, in Transjordan near Maacah (cf. Judg. 11.3).</i> contingent of 12,000 men.^f*class="footnote">and the king of Maacah ... 12,000 men Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i>***

On learning this, David sent out Joab and the entire army of mighty soldiers.

The Ammonites marched out and took up their battle position at the entrance of the gate, while the Arameans of Zobah and Rehob and Tob's contingent and Maacah took their stand separately in the open. Joab saw that there was a battle line against him both front and rear. So he made a selection from all the best soldiers of Israel and arrayed them against the Arameans,

and the rest of the troops he put under the command of his brother Abishai^g*class="footnote">Abishai Heb. "Abshai."</i> and arrayed them against the Ammonites.*

[Joab] said, "If the Arameans prove too strong for me, you come to my aid; and if the Ammonites prove too strong for you, I will come to your aid.

Let us be strong and resolute for the sake of our people and the land^h*class="footnote">land Lit.*

"towns." of our God; and accept the outcome that GOD deems right."

Joab and the troops with him marched into battle against the Arameans, who fled before him.

And when the Ammonites saw that the Arameans had fled, they fled before Abishai and withdrew into the city. So Joab broke off the attack against the Ammonites, and went to Jerusalem.

When the Arameans saw that they had been routed by Israel, they regrouped their forces.

Hadadezerⁱ *class="footnote">Hadadezer Many editions read "Hadarezer."* sent for and brought out the Arameans from across the Euphrates; they came to Helam, led by Shobach, Hadadezer's^j *class="footnote">Hadadezer's Many editions read "Hadarezer's."* army commander.

David was informed of it; he assembled all Israel, crossed the Jordan, and came to Helam. The Arameans drew up their forces against David and attacked him;

but the Arameans were put to flight by Israel. David killed 700 Aramean chariot teams and 40,000 riders;^k *class="footnote">riders Or "foot soldiers"; cf. 1 Chron.*

19.18. *class="footnote">Hadadezer's Heb. "his."* he also struck down Shobach, Hadadezer's^l *class="footnote">Hadadezer's Heb. "his."* army commander, who died there.

And when all the vassal kings of Hadadezer^m *class="footnote">Hadadezer Many editions read "Hadarezer."* saw that they had been routed by Israel, they submitted to Israel and became their vassals. And the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites anymore.

Chapter 11

At the turn of the year, the season when kings go out [to battle], David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him, and they devastated Ammon and besieged Rabbah; David remained in Jerusalem.

Late one afternoon, David rose from his couch and strolled on the roof of the royal palace; and from the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,

and David sent someone to make inquiries about the woman. He reported, "She is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam [and] wife of Uriah the Hittite."

David sent messengers to fetch her; she came to him and he lay with her—she had just purified herself after her period—and she went back home.

The woman conceived, and she sent word to David, "I am pregnant."

Thereupon David sent a message to Joab, "Send Uriah the Hittite to me"; and Joab sent Uriah to David.

When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab and the troops were faring and how the war was going.

Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and bathe your feet."

When Uriah left the royal palace, a present from the king followed him.

But Uriah slept at the entrance of the royal palace, along with the other officers of his lord, and did not go down to his house.

When David was told that Uriah had not gone down to his house, he said to Uriah, "You just came from a journey; why didn't you go down to your house?"

Uriah answered David, "The Ark and Israel and Judah are located at Succoth, and my master Joab and Your Majesty's men are camped in the open; how can I go home and eat and drink and sleep with my wife? As you live, by your very life,^a *class="footnote">As you live, by your very life Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Emendation yields "As GOD lives and as you*

live" (cf. 1 Sam. 20.3; 25.26; etc.). Lit. "as you live and as your being lives." I will not do this!"

David said to Uriah, "Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will send you off." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. The next day, David summoned him, and he ate and drank with him until he got him drunk; but in the evening, [Uriah] went out to sleep in the same place, with his lord's officers; he did not go down to his home.

In the morning, David wrote a letter to Joab, which he sent with Uriah. He wrote in the letter as follows: "Place Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest; then fall back so that he may be killed."

So when Joab was besieging the city, he stationed Uriah at the point where he knew that there were able warriors.

Men from the city sallied out and attacked Joab, and some of David's officers among the troops fell; Uriah the Hittite was among those who died.

Joab sent a full report of the battle to David.

He instructed the messenger as follows: "When you finish reporting to the king all about the battle,

the king may get angry and say to you, 'Why did you come so close to the city to attack it? Didn't you know that they would shoot from the wall?

Who struck down Abimelech son of Jerubbesheth?^b*Jerubbesheth* The earlier form is Jerubbaal (another name for Gideon), Judg. 7.1; on *-bosheth/besheth* for *-baal*, see note at 2 Sam. 4.4. For the event at Thebez described here, see Judg. 9.35ff. Was it not a woman who dropped an upper millstone on him from the wall at Thebez, from which he died? Why did you come so close to the wall?' Then say: 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite was among those killed.'"

The messenger set out; he came and told David all that Joab had sent him to say.^c*Septuagint continues with a recapitulation of vv. 19-21.*

The messenger said to David, "First their men prevailed against us and sallied out against us into the open; then we drove them back up to the entrance to the gate.

But the archers shot at your men from the wall and some of Your Majesty's men fell; your servant Uriah the Hittite also fell."

Whereupon David said to the messenger, "Give Joab this message: 'Do not be distressed about the matter. The sword always takes its toll.^d*always takes its toll* Lit. "consumes the like and the like." Press your attack on the city and destroy it!' Encourage him!"

When Uriah's wife heard that her husband Uriah was dead, she lamented over her husband.

After the period of mourning was over, David sent and had her brought into his palace; she became his wife and she bore him a son.
But OD was displeased with what David had done,

Chapter 12

and OD sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said, "There were two men in the same city, one rich and one poor.

The rich one had very large flocks and herds, but the poor one had only one little ewe lamb that he had bought. He tended it and it grew up together with him and his children: it used to share his morsel of bread, drink from his cup, and nestle in his bosom; it was like a daughter to him.

One day, a traveler came to the rich man, but he was loath to take anything from his own flocks or herds to prepare a meal for the guest who had come to him; so he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

David flew into a rage against the man, and said to Nathan, "As GOD lives, the man who did this^{^a<i class="footnote">b</i>the man who did this Or "any man who has done this."</i> deserves to die! He must pay for the lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and showed no pity."}

And Nathan said to David, "That man is you! Thus said the ETERNAL, the God of Israel: 'It was I who anointed you king over Israel and it was I who rescued you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and possession of your master's wives; and I gave you the House of Israel and Judah; and if that were not enough, I would give you twice as much more.

Why then have you flouted GOD's command—and done what displeases Me?^{^b<i class="footnote">b</i>Me So <i>qere</i>; <i>kethib</i> "Him."</i> You have put Uriah the Hittite to the sword; you took his wife and made her your wife and had him killed by the sword of the Ammonites. Therefore the sword shall never depart from your House—because you spurned Me by taking the wife of Uriah the Hittite and making her your wife.'}

Thus said GOD: 'I will make a calamity rise against you from within your own house; I will take your wives and give them to another man before your very eyes and he shall sleep with your wives under this very sun.

You acted in secret, but I will make this happen in the sight of all Israel and in broad daylight.'"

David said to Nathan, "I stand guilty before GOD!" And Nathan replied to David, "GOD has remitted your sin; you shall not die.

However, since you have spurned the enemies of^{^c<i class="footnote">b</i>the enemies of The phrase is intended to avoid saying "spurned GOD"; cf. first note at 1 Sam. 25.22.</i> GOD by this deed, even the child about to be born to you shall die."}

Nathan went home, and GOD afflicted the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and it became critically ill.

David entreated God for the boy; David fasted, and he went in and spent the night lying^{^d<i class="footnote">b</i>lying Some Septuagint mss. and 4QSam^a add "in sackcloth"; cf. 1 Kings 21.27.</i> on the ground.}

The senior servants of his household tried to induce him to get up from the ground; but he refused, nor would he partake of food with them.

On the seventh day the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell David that the child was dead; for they said, "We spoke to him when the child was alive and he wouldn't listen to us; how can we tell him that the child is dead? He might do something terrible."

When David saw his servants talking in whispers, David understood that the child was dead; David asked his servants, "Is the child dead?" "Yes," they replied.

Thereupon David rose from the ground; he bathed and anointed himself, and he changed his clothes. He went into the House of GOD and prostrated himself. Then he went home and asked for food, which they set before him, and he ate.

His courtiers asked him, "Why have you acted in this manner? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but now that the child is dead, you rise and take food!"

He replied, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept because I thought: 'Who knows? GOD may have pity on me, and the child may live.'

But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will never come back to me."

David consoled his wife Bathsheba; he went to her and lay with her. She bore a son and she named him Solomon. GOD favored him, sending a message through the prophet Nathan; and he was named

Jedidiah^e*Jedidiah* I.e., "Beloved of GOD." at GOD's behest.

^f*Vv. 26-29 are abridged in 1 Chron. 20.1b.* Joab attacked Rabbah of Ammon and captured the royal city.

Joab sent messengers to David and said, "I have attacked Rabbah and I have already captured the water city.^g*the water city* Meaning of Heb. uncertain; perhaps the source of the water supply.

Now muster the rest of the troops and besiege the city and capture it; otherwise I will capture the city myself, and my name will be connected with it."

David mustered all the troops and marched on Rabbah, and he attacked it and captured it.

^h*Vv. 30-31 are found also in 1 Chron. 20.2-3.* The crown was taken from the head of their kingⁱ*their king* Heb. *malkam*, perhaps equivalent to "Milcom," the Ammonite deity; cf. 1 Kings 11.5. and it was placed on David's head—it weighed a talent of gold, and [on it]^j*[on it]* So Targum and 1 Chron. 20.2. were precious stones. He also carried off a vast amount of booty from the city.

He led out the people who lived there and set them to work with saws, iron threshing boards, and iron axes, or assigned them to brickmaking; David did this to all the towns of Ammon. Then David and all the troops returned to Jerusalem.

Chapter 13

This happened sometime afterward: Absalom son of David had a beautiful sister named Tamar, and Amnon son of David became infatuated with her. Amnon was so distraught because of his [half-]sister Tamar that he became sick; for she was a virgin,^a*she was a virgin* And thus well protected. and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her.

Amnon had a friend named Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimah; Jonadab was a very clever man.

He asked him, "Why are you so dejected, O prince, morning after morning? Tell me!" Amnon replied, "I am in love with Tamar, the sister of my brother Absalom!"

Jonadab said to him, "Lie down in your bed and pretend you are sick. When your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in front of me, so that I may look on, and let her serve it to me.'"

Amnon lay down and pretended to be sick. The king came to see him, and Amnon said to the king, "Let my sister Tamar come and prepare a couple of cakes in front of me, and let her bring them to me."

David sent a message to Tamar in the palace, "Please go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him."

Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was in bed. She took dough and kneaded it into cakes in front of him, and cooked the cakes.

She took the pan and set out [the cakes],^b*pan and set out [the cakes]*

Meaning of Heb. uncertain.

but Amnon refused to eat and ordered everyone^c everyone I.e., the servants in attendance.

to withdraw. After everyone else had withdrawn, Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food inside and feed me." Tamar took the cakes she had made and brought them to her brother inside. But when she served them to him, he caught hold of her and said to her, "Come lie with me, sister."

But she said to him, "Don't, brother. Don't force me. Such things are not done in Israel! Don't do such a vile thing! Where will I carry my shame? And you, you will be like any of the scoundrels in Israel! Please, speak to the king; he will not refuse me to you."

But he would not listen to her; he overpowered her and lay with her by force.

Then Amnon felt a very great loathing for her; indeed, his loathing for her was greater than the passion he had felt for her. And Amnon said to her, "Get out!"

She pleaded with him, "Please don't commit this wrong; to send me away would be even worse^d commit this wrong ... even worse

Meaning of Heb. uncertain.

than the first wrong you committed against me." But he would not listen to her.

He summoned his young attendant and said, "Get that woman^e that woman Lit. "that." out of my presence, and bar the door behind her."

She was wearing an ornamented tunic,^f ornamented tunic See Gen. 37.3 and note.

for maiden princesses were customarily dressed in such garments.^g in such garments

Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Emendation yields "(thus) in olden times," *me'olam*.

His attendant took her outside and barred the door after her.

Tamar put dust on her head and rent the ornamented tunic she was wearing; she put her hands on her head,^h put her hands on her head

A gesture of wild grief; cf. Jer. 2.37.

and walked away, screaming loudly as she went. Her brother Absalom said to her, "Was it your brother Amnonⁱ Amnon Heb. "Aminon." who did this to you? For the present, sister, keep quiet about it; he is your brother. Don't brood over the matter." And Tamar remained in her brother Absalom's house, forlorn.

When King David heard about all this, he was greatly upset.^j Septuagint adds "but he did not rebuke his son Amnon, for he favored him, since he was his first-born"; cf. 1 Kings 1.6.

Absalom didn't utter a word to Amnon, good or bad; but Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar.

Two years later, when Absalom was having his flocks sheared at Baal-hazor near Ephraim, Absalom invited all the king's sons.

And Absalom came to the king and said, "Your servant is having his flocks sheared. Would Your Majesty and your retinue accompany your servant?" But the king answered Absalom, "No, my son. We must not all come, or we'll be a burden to you." He urged him, but he would not go, and he said good-bye to him.

Thereupon Absalom said, "In that case, let my brother Amnon come with us," to which the king replied, "He shall not go with you."

But Absalom urged him, and he sent with him Amnon and all the other princes.^k

class="footnote">Septuagint adds "and Absalom made a feast fit for a king."

Now Absalom gave his attendants these orders: "Watch, and when Amnon is merry with wine and I tell you to strike down Amnon, kill him! Don't be afraid, for it is I who give you the order. Act with determination, like brave men!"

Absalom's attendants did to Amnon as Absalom had ordered; whereupon all the other princes mounted their mules and fled.

They were still on the road when a rumor reached David that Absalom had killed all the princes, and that not one of them had survived.

At this, David rent his garment and lay down on the ground, and all his courtiers stood by with their clothes rent.^l*and all his courtiers ... clothes rent* Septuagint reads "and all his courtiers who were standing by him rent their clothes."

But Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimah, said, "My lord must not think that all the young princes have been killed. Only Amnon is dead; for this has been decided by^m*decided by* Lit. "determined by the command of." Absalom ever since his sister Tamar was violated.

So my lord the king must not think for a moment that all the princes are dead; Amnon alone is dead."

Meanwhile Absalom had fled.
The watchman on duty looked up and saw a large crowd coming from the road to his rear,ⁿ*from the road to his rear* Emendation yields "down the slope of the Horonaim road. The watchman came and told the king 'I see men coming from the Horonaim road.'" Cf. Septuagint. from the side of the hill.

Jonadab said to the king, "See, the princes have come! It is just as your servant said."

As he finished speaking, the princes came in and broke into weeping; and David and all his courtiers wept bitterly, too.

Absalom had fled, and he came to Talmai son of Ammihud, king of Geshur.

And [King David] mourned over his son a long time.

Absalom, who had fled to Geshur, remained there three years.

And King David^o*King David* Some Septuagint mss. and 4QSam^a read "the spirit (*ruah*) of the king" (i.e., the king's wrath; cf. Eccl. 10.4), in which case the first half of the verse could be rendered as "And King David's rage toward Absalom abated." was pining away for Absalom, for [the king] had gotten over Amnon's death.

Chapter 14

Joab son of Zeruiah could see that the king's mind was on Absalom; so Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a woman who was wise.^a*wise* I.e., in this context, quick-witted and resourceful. He said to her, "Pretend you are in mourning; put on mourning clothes and don't anoint yourself with oil; and act like a woman who has grieved a long time over a departed one.

Go to the king and say to him thus and thus." And Joab told her what to say.^b*told her what to say* Lit. "put words into her mouth."

The Tekoite woman came^c*came* So many mss. and printed editions. Most mss. and printed editions read "said." to the king, flung herself face down to the ground, and prostrated herself. She cried out, "Help, O king!"

The king asked her, "What troubles you?" And she answered, "Alas, I am a widow, my husband is dead.

Your maidservant had two sons. The two of them came to blows out in the fields where there was no one to stop them, and one of them struck the other and killed him.

Then the whole clan confronted your maidservant and said, 'Hand over the one who killed his brother, that we may put him to death for the slaying of his brother, even though we wipe out the heir.'^{<d}<i class="footnote">even though we wipe out the heirEmendation yields "Thus they would destroy the [last] heir and..."</i> Thus they would quench the last ember remaining to me, and leave my husband without name or remnant upon the earth."</sup>

The king said to the woman, "Go home. I will issue an order in your behalf."

And the Tekoite woman said to the king, "My lord king, may the guilt be on me and on my ancestral house; Your Majesty and his throne are guiltless."

The king said, "If anyone says anything more to you, have him brought to me, and he will never trouble you again."

She replied, "Let Your Majesty be mindful of the ETERNAL your God and restrain the blood avenger bent on destruction, so that my son may not be killed." And he said, "As GOD lives, not a hair of your son shall fall to the ground."

Then the woman said, "Please let your maidservant say another word to my lord the king." "Speak on," said the king.

And the woman said, "Why then have you planned the like against God's people? In making this pronouncement, Your Majesty condemns himself in that Your Majesty does not bring back his own banished one.

We must all die; we are like water that is poured out on the ground and cannot be gathered up. God will not take away the life of one who makes plans so that no one may be kept banished.^e<i class="footnote">God will not ... banishedMeaning of Heb. uncertain. The apparent sense is: God will not punish you for bringing back the banished Absalom.</i>

And the reason I have come to say these things to the king, my lord, is that the people have frightened me. Your maidservant thought I would speak to Your Majesty; perhaps Your Majesty would act on his handmaid's plea.

For Your Majesty would surely agree to deliver his handmaid from the hands of anyone [who would seek to]^f<i class="footnote">the hands of anyone [who would seek to]Or "the man's clutches—which would," namely the blood avenger of v. 11.</i> cut off both me and my son from the heritage^g<i class="footnote">heritageI.e., people.</i> of God.

Your maidservant thought, 'Let the word of my lord the king provide comfort; for my lord the king is like an angel of God, understanding everything, good and bad.' May the ETERNAL your God be with you."

In reply, the king said to the woman, "Do not withhold from me anything I ask you!" The woman answered, "Let my lord the king speak."

The king asked, "Is Joab in league with you in all this?" The woman replied, "As you live, my lord the king, it is just as my lord the king says.^h<i class="footnote">it is just as my lord the king saysLit. "there is no turning to the right or to the left of what my lord the king says."</i> Yes, your servant Joab was the one who instructed me, and it was he who told your maidservant everything she was to say.ⁱ<i class="footnote">told your maidservant everything she was to saySee note at v. 3.</i>

It was to conceal the real purpose of the matter that your servant Joab did this thing. My lord is as wise as an angel of God, and he knows all that goes on in the land."

Then the king said to Joab, "I will do this thing. Go and bring back my boy Absalom."

Joab flung himself face down on the ground and prostrated himself. Joab blessed the king and said, "Today your servant knows that he has found favor with you, my lord king, for Your Majesty has granted his servant's request."

And Joab went at once to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

But the king said, "Let him go directly to his house and not present himself to me." So Absalom went directly to his house and did not present himself to the king.

No other man in Israel was as admired for his beauty as Absalom; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head he was without blemish.

When he cut his hair—he had to have it cut every year, for it grew too heavy for him—the hair of his head weighed two hundred shekels by the royal weight.

Absalom had three sons and a daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a beautiful woman.

Absalom lived in Jerusalem two years without appearing before the king. Then Absalom sent for Joab, in order to send him to the king; but Joab would not come to him. He sent for him a second time, but he would not come.

So [Absalom] said to his servants, "Look, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire." And Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

Joab came at once to Absalom's house and said to him, "Why did your servants set fire to my field?"

Absalom replied to Joab, "I sent for you to come here; I wanted to send you to the king to say [on my behalf]: 'Why did I leave Geshur? I would be better off if I were still there. Now let me appear before the king; and if I am guilty of anything, let him put me to death!'"

Joab went to the king and reported to him; whereupon he summoned Absalom. He came to the king and flung himself face down to the ground before the king. And the king kissed Absalom.

Chapter 15

Sometime afterward, Absalom provided himself with a chariot, horses, and fifty outrunners.

Absalom used to rise early and stand by the road to the city gates; and whenever someone had a case that was to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call out, "What town are you from?" And when the answer came, "Your servant is from such and such a tribe"^{class="footnote-marker">a}*class="footnote">such and such a tribe Lit. "one of the tribes."</i> in Israel,"*

Absalom would say, "It is clear that your claim is right and just, but there is no one assigned to you by the king to hear it."

And Absalom went on, "If only I were appointed judge in the land and everyone with a legal dispute came before me, I would see that they got their rights."

And if a man approached to bow to him, [Absalom] would extend his hand and take hold of him and kiss him.

Absalom did this to every Israelite who came to the king for judgment. Thus Absalom won away the hearts of Israel's citizens.

After a period of forty^{class="footnote-marker">b}*class="footnote">forty Some Septuagint mss. and Syriac read "four."</i> years had gone by, Absalom said to the king, "Let me go to Hebron and fulfill a vow that I made to GOD.*

For your servant made a vow when I lived in Geshur of Aram: If GOD ever brings me back to Jerusalem, I will worship GOD." ^cSome Septuagint mss. add "in Hebron." The king said to him, "Go in peace"; and so he set out for Hebron. But Absalom sent agents to all the tribes of Israel to say, "When you hear the blast of the horn, announce that Absalom has become king in Hebron."

Two hundred Jerusalemites accompanied Absalom; they were invited and went in good faith, suspecting nothing.

Absalom also sent [to fetch] ^dsent [to fetch] Some Septuagint mss. and 4QSam^a read "sent and summoned." Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his town, Giloh, when the sacrifices were to be offered. The conspiracy gained strength, and the people supported Absalom in increasing numbers.

Someone came and told David, "The loyalty of Israel's force has veered toward Absalom."

Whereupon David said to all the courtiers who were with him in Jerusalem, "Let us flee at once, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must get away quickly, or he will soon overtake us and bring down disaster upon us and put the city to the sword."

The king's courtiers said to the king, "Whatever our lord the king decides, your servants are ready."

So the king left, followed by his entire household, except for ten concubines whom the king left to mind the palace.

The king left, followed by all the people, ^eall the people Septuagint reads "his courtiers." and they stopped at the last house. ^fthe last house **Meaning of Heb. uncertain.**

All his followers ^ghis followers Septuagint reads "the people." marched past him, including all the Cherethites and all the Pelethites; and ^hand **Emendation yields "and Ittai and."** all six hundred Gittites, who had accompanied him from Gath, also marched by the king.

And the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why should you too go with us? Go back and stay with the [new] king, for you are a foreigner and you are also an exile from ⁱfrom So one Heb. ms. and several ancient versions; most mss. and editions read "to." your country.

You came only yesterday; should I make you wander about with us today, when I myself must go wherever I can? Go back, and take your kin with you, ^j[in] **Meaning of Heb. uncertain.** Septuagint reads "and may GOD show you" (cf., e.g., 2.6). true faithfulness."

Ittai replied to the king, "As GOD lives and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, there your servant will be, whether for death or for life!"

And David said to Ittai, "Then march by." And Ittai the Gittite and all his men and all the dependents who were with him marched by.

The whole countryside wept aloud as the troops marched by. The king crossed the Kidron Valley, and all the troops crossed by the road to ^kcrossed the Kidron ... by the road to **Meaning of Heb. uncertain.** Emendation yields "stopped in the Kidron Valley, while all the people marched on before him by way of the Mount of Olives to..." the wilderness.

Then Zadok appeared, with all the Levites carrying the Ark of the Covenant of God; and they set down the Ark of God until all the people

had finished marching out of the city. Abiathar also came up.^l***Abiathar also came up*** Meaning of Heb. uncertain.

But the king said to Zadok, "Take the Ark of God back to the city. If I find favor with GOD, I will be brought back to see it and its abode.

And if [God] should say, 'I do not want you,' I am ready; I accept what [God] deems right."

And the king said to the priest Zadok, "Do you understand? You return^m***Do you ... return*** Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Emendation yields "Look, you and Abiathar return." to the safety of the city with your two sons, your own son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan.

Look, I shall linger in the steppes of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me."

Zadok and Abiathar brought the Ark of God back to Jerusalem, and they stayed there.

David meanwhile went up the slope of the [Mount of] Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he walked barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and wept as they went up.

David [was] told that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom, and he prayed, "Please, O GOD, frustrate Ahithophel's counsel!"

When David reached the top, where people would prostrate themselves to God, Hushai the Archite was there to meet him, with his robe torn and with earth on his head.

David said to him, "If you march on with me, you will be a burden to me. But if you go back to the city and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; I was your father's servant formerly, and now I will be yours,' then you can nullify Ahithophel's counsel for me.

You will have the priests Zadok and Abiathar there, and you can report everything that you hear in the king's palace to the priests Zadok and Abiathar.

Also, their two sons are there with them, Zadok's son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan; and through them you can report to me everything you hear."

And so Hushai, the friend of David, reached the city as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

Chapter 16

David had passed a little beyond the summit when Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth came toward him with a pair of saddled donkeys carrying two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred cakes of raisin, one hundred cakes of figs,^a***figs*** Lit. "summer fruit." and a jar of wine.

The king asked Ziba, "What are you doing with these?" Ziba answered, "The donkeys are for Your Majesty's family to ride on, the bread and figs are for the attendants to eat, and the wine is to be drunk by any who are exhausted in the wilderness."

"And where is your master's son?" the king asked. "He is staying in Jerusalem," Ziba replied to the king, "for he thinks that the House of Israel will now give him back the throne of his grandfather."

The king said to Ziba, "Then all that belongs to Mephibosheth is now yours!" And Ziba replied, "I bow low. Your Majesty is most gracious to me."

As King David was approaching Bahurim, a member of Saul's clan—a man named Shimei son of Gera—came out from there, hurling insults as he came. He threw stones at David and all King David's courtiers, while all the troops and all the warriors were at his right and his left.

And these are the insults that Shimei hurled: "Get out, get out, you criminal, you villain!"

GOD is paying you back for all your crimes against the family of Saul, whose throne you seized. GOD is handing over the throne to your son Absalom; you are in trouble because you are a criminal!"

Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why let that dead dog abuse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head!"

But the king said, "What has this to do with you,"^{class="footnote-marker">b}<i class="footnote">b>What has this to do with you Lit. "What have I and you."</i> you sons of Zeruiah? He is abusing [me] only because GOD told him to abuse David; and who is to say, 'Why did You do that?'"</sup>

David said further to Abishai and all the courtiers, "If my son, my own issue, seeks to kill me, how much more the Benjaminite! Let him go on hurling abuse, for GOD has told him to.

Perhaps GOD will look upon my punishment^{class="footnote-marker">c}<i class="footnote">b>punishment So <i>kethib</i>; <i>qere</i> "eye." Ancient versions read "suffering."</i> and recompense me for the abuse [Shimei] has uttered today."</sup>

David and his men continued on their way, while Shimei walked alongside on the slope of the hill, insulting him as he walked, and throwing stones at him and flinging dirt.

The king and all who accompanied him arrived^{class="footnote-marker">d}<i class="footnote">b>arrived Some Septuagint mss. add "at the Jordan."</i> exhausted, and he rested there.</sup>

Meanwhile Absalom and all the troops, Israel's force, arrived in Jerusalem, together with Ahithophel.

When Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came before Absalom, Hushai said to Absalom, "Long live the king! Long live the king!"

But Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why didn't you go with your friend?"

"Not at all!" Hushai replied. "I am for the one whom GOD and these troops and all the rest of Israel's force has chosen, and I will stay with him.

Furthermore, whom should I serve, if not David's^{class="footnote-marker">e}<i class="footnote">b>David's Heb. "his."</i> son? As I was in your father's service, so I will be in yours."</sup>

Absalom then said to Ahithophel, "What do you advise us to do?"

And Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Have intercourse with your father's concubines, whom he left to mind the palace; and when all Israel hears that you have dared the wrath of your father, all who support you will be encouraged."

So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom lay with his father's concubines with the full knowledge^{class="footnote-marker">f}<i class="footnote">b>with the full knowledge Lit. "before the eyes."</i> of all Israel.—</sup>

In those days, the advice that Ahithophel gave was accepted like an oracle sought from God; that is how all the advice of Ahithophel was esteemed both by David and by Absalom.

Chapter 17

And Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Let me pick twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David.

I will come upon him when he is weary and disheartened, and I will throw him into a panic; and when all the troops with him flee, I will kill the king alone.

And I will bring back all the people to you; when all have come back [except] the man you are after,^{class="footnote-marker">a}<i</sup>

^bto you; when all have come back [except] the man you are after Or "to you, as when everyone returned [to] the man you are after," i.e., to David upon the deaths of the previous kings, namely Saul and his son Ish-baal ("Ish-bosheth"); so Abravanel. Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Septuagint reads "to you as a bride comes back to her husband; you seek the life of but one man, and..." all the people will be at peace."

The advice pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

But Absalom said, "Summon Hushai the Archite as well, so we can hear what he too has to say."

Hushai came to Absalom, and Absalom said to him, "This is what Ahithophel has advised. Shall we follow his advice? If not, what do you say?"

Hushai said to Absalom, "This time the advice that Ahithophel has given is not good.

You know," Hushai continued, "that your father and his men are courageous fighters, and they are as desperate as a bear in the wild robbed of her whelps. Your father is an experienced soldier, and he will not spend the night with the troops;

even now he must be hiding in one of the pits or in some other place. And if any of them^b

^bSome Septuagint mss. read "the troops" (i.e., Absalom's) fall at the first attack, whoever hears of it will say, 'A disaster has struck the troops that follow Absalom';

and even if he is a warrior with the heart of a lion, he will be shaken—for all Israel knows that your father and the soldiers with him are courageous fighters.

So I advise that all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba—as numerous as the sands of the sea—be called up to join you, and that you yourself march into battle.^c

^cinto battle Ancient versions read "among them."

When we come upon him in whatever place he may be, we'll descend on him [as thick] as dew falling on the ground; and no one will survive, neither he nor any of the men with him.

And if he withdraws into a city, all Israel will bring ropes to that city and drag its stones^d

^dits stones Heb. "it." as far as the riverbed, until not even a pebble of it is left."

Absalom and all of Israel's force agreed that the advice of Hushai the Archite was better than that of Ahithophel.—GOD had decreed that Ahithophel's sound advice be nullified, in order that GOD might bring ruin upon Absalom.

Then Hushai told the priests Zadok and Abiathar, "This is what Ahithophel advised Absalom and the elders of Israel; this is what I advised.

Now send at once and tell David, 'Do not spend the night at the fords of the wilderness, but cross over at once; otherwise the king and all the troops with him will be annihilated.'"

Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En-rogel, and a maidservant would go and bring them word and they in turn would go and inform King David. For they themselves dared not be seen entering the city.

But a boy saw them and informed Absalom. They left at once and came to the house of a man in Bahurim who had a well in his courtyard. They got down into it,

and the wife took a cloth, spread it over the mouth of the well, and scattered groats on top of it, so that nothing would be noticed.

When Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house and asked where Ahimaaz and Jonathan were, the woman told them that they had crossed a bit beyond the water.^e

^ea bit beyond the water Meaning of Heb. uncertain.

Targum reads "the Jordan." They searched, but found nothing; and they returned to Jerusalem.

After they were gone, [Ahimaaz and Jonathan] came up from the well and went and informed King David. They said to David, "Go and cross the water quickly, for Ahithophel has advised thus and thus concerning you."

David and all the troops with him promptly crossed the Jordan, and by daybreak not one was left who had not crossed the Jordan.

When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and went home to his native town. He set his affairs in order, and then he hanged himself. He was buried in his ancestral tomb.

David had reached Mahanaim when Absalom, and Israel's entire force with him, crossed the Jordan.

Absalom had appointed Amasa army commander in place of Joab; Amasa was the son of a man named Ithra the Israelite, who had married Abigail, daughter of Nahash and sister of Joab's mother Zeruiah.^f*Israelite ... Zeruiah* Some Septuagint mss. and 1 Chron. 2.12-17 read "Ishmaelite" and give a somewhat different genealogy.

The Israelites and Absalom encamped in the district of Gilead.

When David reached Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from Rabbath-ammon, Machir son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim

presented^g*presented* Moved up from v. 29 for clarity. couches, basins, and earthenware; also wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, parched grain,^h*parched grain* Lacking in the Septuagint and Syriac.

honey, curds, a flock,ⁱ*curds, a flock* Emendation yields "curds from the flock." and cheese^j*cheese* Meaning of Heb. uncertain. from the herd for David and the troops with him to eat. For they knew that the troops must have grown hungry, faint, and thirsty in the wilderness.

Chapter 18

David mustered the troops who were with him and set over them captains of thousands and captains of hundreds.

David sent out the troops,^a*sent out the troops* Some Septuagint mss. read "divided the troops into three." one-third under the command of Joab, one-third under the command of Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruiah, and one-third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. And David said to the troops, "I myself will march out with you."

But the troops replied, "No! For if some of us flee, the rest will not be concerned about us; even if half of us should die, the others will not be concerned about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us."^b*you are worth ten thousand of us* So two Heb. mss., Septuagint, and Vulgate; cf. 1 Kings 1.18 and note. Most mss. and the editions read "Now there are ten thousand like us." Therefore, it is better for you to support us from the town.

And the king said to them, "I will do whatever you think best." So the king stood beside the gate as all the troops marched out by their hundreds and thousands.

The king gave orders to Joab, Abishai, and Ittai: "Deal gently with my boy Absalom, for my sake." All the troops heard the king give the order about Absalom to all the officers.

The troops marched out into the open to confront the Israelites,^c*Israelites *The usual term in this narrative for the supporters of Absalom. and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim.^d*Ephraim *Some Septuagint mss. read "Mahanaim"; cf. 17.24.

The Israelite troops were routed by David's followers, and a great slaughter took place there that day—twenty thousand men. The battle spread out over that whole region, and the forest devoured more troops that day than the sword.

Absalom encountered some of David's followers. Absalom was riding on a mule, and as the mule passed under the tangled branches of a great terebinth, his hair got caught in the terebinth; he was held^e*was held *Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Ancient versions and 4QSam^a read "was left hanging"; cf. v. 10. between heaven and earth as the mule under him kept going.

One of the men saw it and told Joab, "I have just seen Absalom hanging from a terebinth."

Joab said to the one who told him, "You saw it! Why didn't you kill him then and there?"^f*then and there *Lit. "to the ground." I would have owed you ten^g*ten *Some Septuagint mss. and 4QSam^a read "fifty." shekels of silver and a belt.

But the man answered Joab, "Even if I had a thousand shekels of silver in my hands, I would not raise a hand against the king's son. For the king charged you and Abishai and Ittai in our hearing, 'Watch over my boy Absalom, for my sake.'^h*for my sake *So some Heb. mss. and ancient versions. Most mss. and editions read "who"—perhaps meaning "whoever you are."

If I betrayed myselfⁱ*If I betrayed myself *I.e., if I killed Absalom.—and nothing is hidden from the king—you would have stood aloof.

Joab replied, "Then I will not wait for you."^j*Then I will not wait for you *Some Septuagint mss. and Targum read "Therefore, I will begin before you." He took three darts in his hand and drove them into Absalom's chest. [Absalom] was still alive in the thick growth of the terebinth, when ten of Joab's young arms-bearers closed in and struck at Absalom until he died.

Then Joab sounded the horn, and the troops gave up their pursuit of the Israelites; for Joab held the troops in check.

They took Absalom and flung him into a large pit in the forest, and they piled up a very great heap of stones over it. Then all the Israelites fled to their homes.—

Now Absalom, in his lifetime, had taken the pillar that is in the Valley of the King and set it up for himself; for he said, "I have no son to keep my name alive." He had named the pillar after himself, and it has been called Absalom's Monument to this day.

Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, "Let me run and report to the king that GOD has vindicated him against his enemies."

But Joab said to him, "You shall not be the one to bring tidings today. You may bring tidings some other day, but you'll not bring any today; for the king's son is dead!"

And Joab said to a Cushite, "Go tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed to Joab and ran off.

But Ahimaaz son of Zadok again said to Joab, "No matter what, let me run, too, behind the Cushite." Joab asked, "Why should you run, my boy, when you have no news worth telling?"^k**worth telling** Meaning of Heb. uncertain.

"I am going to run anyway." "Then run," he said. So Ahimaaz ran by way of the Plain, and he passed the Cushite.

David was sitting between the two gates.^l**the two gates** I.e., the inner and outer gateways. The watchman on the roof of the gate walked over to the city wall. He looked up and saw a man running alone.

The watchman called down and told the king; and the king said, "If he is alone, he has news to report." As he was coming nearer, the watchman saw another man running; and he called out to the gatekeeper, "There is another man running alone." And the king said, "That one, too, brings news."

The watchman said, "I can see that the first one runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok"; to which the king replied, "He is a good man, and he comes with good news."

Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, "All is well!" He bowed low with his face to the ground and said, "Praised be the ETERNAL your God, who has delivered up those involved—who raised their hand against my lord the king."

The king asked, "Is my boy Absalom safe?" And Ahimaaz answered, "I saw a large crowd when Your Majesty's servant Joab was sending your servant off,^m**a large crowd ... sending your servant off** Meaning of Heb. uncertain. but I don't know what it was about."

The king said, "Step aside and stand over there"; he stepped aside and waited.

Just then the Cushite came up; and the Cushite said, "Let my lord the king be informed that GOD has vindicated you today against all who rebelled against you!"

The king asked the Cushite, "Is my boy Absalom safe?" And the Cushite replied, "May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rose against you to do you harm fare like that young man!"

Chapter 19

^aIn some versions, this verse is labeled as 18.33, and chapter 19 starts with the next verse. The king was shaken. He went up to the upper chamber of the gateway and wept, moaning these words as he went,^b**went** Some Septuagint mss. read "wept." "My son Absalom! O my son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Joab was told that the king was weeping and mourning over Absalom.

And the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the troops, for that day the troops heard that the king was grieving over his son.

The troops stole into town that day like troops ashamed after running away in battle.

The king covered his face and the king kept crying aloud, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Joab came to the king in his quarters and said, "Today you have humiliated all your followers, who this day saved your life, and the lives of your sons and daughters, and the lives of your wives and concubines,

by showing love for those who hate you and hate for those who love you. For you have made clear today that the officers and servicemen mean nothing to you. I am sure that if Absalom were alive today and the rest of us dead, you would have preferred it.

Now arise, come out and placate your followers! For I swear by GOD that if^{if} So Septuagint, 4QSam^a, and some other Heb. mss., and an ancient masoretic tradition; ordinary texts omit "if." you do not come out, not a single man will remain with you overnight; and that would be a greater disaster for you than any disaster that has befallen you from your youth until now."

So the king arose and sat down in the gateway; and when all the troops were told that the king was sitting in the gateway, all the troops presented themselves to the king. Now the Israelites had fled to their homes.

All the people throughout the tribes of Israel were arguing: Some said, "The king saved us from the hands of our enemies, and he delivered us from the hands of the Philistines; and just now he had to flee the country because of Absalom.

But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, has died in battle; why then do you sit idle instead of escorting the king back?"

The talk of all Israel reached the king in his quarters. So King David sent this message to the priests Zadok and Abiathar: "Speak to the elders of Judah and say, 'Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his palace?

You are my kin, my own flesh and blood! Why should you be the last to escort the king back?'

And to Amasa say this, 'You are my own flesh and blood. May God do thus and more to me if you do not become my army commander permanently in place of Joab!'"

So [Amasa] swayed the hearts of Judah's entire contingent without opposition; and they sent a message to the king: "Come back with all your followers."

The king started back and arrived at the Jordan; and the Judahites went to Gilgal to meet the king and to conduct the king across the Jordan.

Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, hurried down with Judah's contingent to meet King David,

accompanied by a thousand Benjaminites. ^{Meaning of parts of the rest of vv. 18 and 19 uncertain.} And Ziba, the servant of the House of Saul, together with his fifteen sons and twenty slaves, rushed down to the Jordan ahead of the king

while the crossing was being made, to escort the king's family over, and to do whatever he wished. Shimei son of Gera flung himself before the king as he was about to cross the Jordan.

He said to the king, "Let not my lord hold me guilty, and do not remember the wrong your servant committed on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem; let Your Majesty give it no thought.

For your servant knows that he has sinned; so here I have come down today, the first of all the House of Joseph, to meet my lord the king."

Thereupon Abishai son of Zeruiah spoke up, "Shouldn't Shimei be put to death for that—insulting GOD's anointed?"

But David said, "What has this to do with you, ^{What has this to do with you} See note at 16.10. you sons of Zeruiah, that you should cross me today? Should even a single Israelite be put to death today? Don't I ^I Some Septuagint mss. read "you." know that today I am again king over Israel?"

Then the king said to Shimei, "You shall not die"; and the king gave him his oath.

Mephibosheth, the grandson of Saul, also came down to meet the king. He had not pared his toenails, or trimmed his mustache, or washed his clothes from the day that the king left until the day he returned safe.

When he came [from]^g*came [from]* So Septuagint. Heb. "entered." Jerusalem to meet the king, the king asked him, "Why didn't you come with me, Mephibosheth?"

He replied, "My lord the king, my own servant^h*my own servant* I.e., Ziba (cf. v. 30 and 9.2ff.)*deceived me. Your servant planned to saddle his donkey and ride*ⁱ*Your servant planned to saddle his donkey and ride* Ancient versions read "Your servant said to him, 'Saddle my donkey, that I may ride...' on it and go with Your Majesty—for your servant is lame.

[Ziba] has slandered your servant to my lord the king. But my lord the king is like an angel of GOD; do as you see fit.

For all the members of my father's family deserved only death from my lord the king; yet you set your servant among those who ate at your table. What right have I to appeal further to Your Majesty?"

The king said to him, "You need not speak further. I decree that you and Ziba shall divide the property."

And Mephibosheth said to the king, "Let him take it all, as long as my lord the king has come home safe."

Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim and passed on to the Jordan with the king, to see him off at^j*passed on... to see him off at* Meaning of Heb. uncertain.*the Jordan.*

Barzillai was very old, eighty years of age; and he had provided the king with food during his stay at Mahanaim, for he was a very wealthy man.

The king said to Barzillai, "Cross over with me, and I will provide for you in Jerusalem at my side."

But Barzillai said to the king, "How many years are left to me that I should go up with Your Majesty to Jerusalem?"

I am now eighty years old. Can I tell the difference between good and bad? Can your servant taste what he eats and drinks? Can I still listen to the singing of men and women? Why then should your servant continue to be a burden to my lord the king?

Your servant could barely cross the Jordan^k*Your servant could barely cross the Jordan* Meaning of Heb. uncertain.*with Your Majesty! Why should Your Majesty reward me so generously?*

Let your servant go back, and let me die in my own town, near the graves of my father and mother. But here is your servant Chimham; let him cross with my lord the king, and do for him as you see fit."

And the king said, "Chimham shall cross with me, and I will do for him as you see fit; and anything you want me to do, I will do for you."

^l*Meaning of parts of vv. 40-44 uncertain.* All the troops crossed the Jordan; and when the king was ready to cross, the king kissed Barzillai and bade him farewell; and [Barzillai] returned to his home.

The king passed on to Gilgal, with Chimham^m*Chimham* Heb. Chimhan.*accompanying him; and all the Judahite soldiers and part of the Israelite army escorted the king across.*

Then Israel's entire contingent came to the king—and said to the king, "Why did our kindred, Judah's contingent, steal you away and escort the king and his family across the Jordan, along with all David's men?"

Judah's side replied to Israel's side, "Because the king is our relative! Why should this upset you? Have we consumed anything that belongs to the king? Has he given us any gifts?"

But Israel's side answered Judah's side, "We have ten shares in the king, and in David, too, we have more than you."ⁿ

marker">n</sup><i class="footnote">in David, too, we have more than you Septuagint reads "we are the first-born, rather than you."</i> Why then have you slighted us? Were we not the first to propose that our king be brought back?" However, Judah's side prevailed over Israel's side.

Chapter 20

A scoundrel named Sheba son of Bichri, a Benjaminite, happened to be there. He sounded the horn and proclaimed:
"We have no portion in David,
No share in Jesse's son!
Back to your homes, O Israel!"
Israel's entire contingent left David and followed Sheba son of Bichri; but Judah's contingent accompanied their king from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

David went to his palace in Jerusalem, and the king took the ten concubines he had left to mind the palace and put them in a guarded place; he provided for them, but he did not cohabit with them. They remained in seclusion until the day they died, in living widowhood. The king said to Amasa, "Call up Judah's force to my standard, and report here three days from now."

Amasa went to call up Judah, but he took longer than the time set for him.

And David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba son of Bichri will cause us more trouble than Absalom. So take your lord's servants and pursue him, before he finds fortified towns and eludes us."^a<i class="footnote">eludes us Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i>

Joab's men, the Cherethites and Pelethites, and all the warriors marched out behind him.^b<i class="footnote">Joab's men ... behind him Emendation yields "Joab, the Cherethites and Pelethites, and all the warriors marched out behind Abishai."</i> They left Jerusalem in pursuit of Sheba son of Bichri. They were near the great stone in Gibeon when Amasa appeared before them. Joab was wearing his military dress, with his sword girded over it and fastened around his waist in its sheath; and, as he stepped forward, it fell out.^c<i class="footnote">Joab was wearing ... it fell out Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i>

Joab said to Amasa, "How are you, brother?" and with his right hand Joab took hold of Amasa's beard as if to kiss him.

Amasa was not on his guard against the sword in Joab's [left] hand, and [Joab] drove it into his belly so that his entrails poured out on the ground and he died; he did not need to strike him a second time.
Joab and his brother Abishai then set off in pursuit of Sheba son of Bichri, while one of Joab's henchmen stood by the corpse^d<i class="footnote">the corpse Heb. "him."</i> and called out, "Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is on David's side, follow Joab!"

Amasa lay in the middle of the road, drenched in his blood; and the man saw that everyone stopped. And when he saw that all the people were stopping, he dragged Amasa from the road into the field and covered him with a garment.

Once he was removed from the road, everybody continued to follow Joab in pursuit of Sheba son of Bichri.

[Sheba] had passed through all the tribes of Israel up to Abel of^e<i class="footnote">of Heb. "and." Cf. v. 15 (and "Abel-beth-maacah" in 1 Kings 15.20 and 2 Kings 15.29).</i> Beth-maacah; and all the Beerites<sup class="footnote-

marker">f</sup><i class="footnote">Beerites Emendation yields "Bichrites"; cf. Septuagint.</i> assembled and followed him inside. [Joab's men] came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maacah; they threw up a siege mound against the city and it stood against the rampart.^g<i class="footnote">and it stood against the rampart Meaning of Heb. uncertain. The phrase would read well in the next verse ("...a clever woman stood on the rampart and shouted...").</i>
All the troops with Joab were engaged in battering the wall,^h<i class="footnote">engaged in battering the wall Lit. "destroying, to topple the wall." Septuagint and Targum read "were planning to topple the wall."</i> when a woman who was wiseⁱ<i class="footnote">wise I.e., in this context, quick-witted and resourceful.</i> shouted from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab to come over here so I can talk to him." He approached her, and the woman asked, "Are you Joab?" "Yes," he answered; and she said to him, "Listen to what your handmaid has to say." "I'm listening," he replied. And she continued, "In olden times people used to say, 'Let them inquire of Abel,'^j<i class="footnote">Let them inquire of Abel Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i> and that was the end of the matter. I am one of those who seek the welfare of the faithful in Israel. But you seek to bring death upon a mother city in Israel! Why should you destroy G<small>OD</small>'s possession?" Joab replied, "Far be it, far be it from me to destroy or to ruin! Not at all! But a certain man from the hill country of Ephraim, named Sheba son of Bichri, has rebelled against King David. Just hand him alone over to us, and I will withdraw from the city." The woman assured Joab, "His head shall be thrown over the wall to you." The woman came to all the people with her wise plan; and they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bichri and threw it down to Joab. He then sounded the horn; those attacking the city dispersed to their homes, and Joab returned to the king in Jerusalem. Joab was commander of the whole army [of] Israel; Benaiah son of Jehoiada was commander of the Cherethites and the Pelethites; Adoram^k<i class="footnote">Adoram So in 1 Kings 12.18 and 2 Chron. 10.18 ("Hadoram"); elsewhere "Adoniram."</i> was in charge of forced labor; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; Sheva^l<i class="footnote">Sheva See second note at 8.17.</i> was scribe; and Zadok and Abiathar were priests. Ira the Jairite also served David as priest.

Chapter 21

There was a famine during the reign of David, year after year for three years. David inquired of G<small>OD</small>, and G<small>OD</small> replied, "It is because of the bloodguilt of Saul and [his] house, for he put some Gibeonites to death." The king summoned the Gibeonites and spoke to them.—Now the Gibeonites were not of Israelite stock, but a remnant of the Amorites, to whom the Israelites had given an oath; and Saul had tried to wipe them out in his zeal for the people of Israel and Judah.—David asked the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? How shall I make expiation, so that you may bless G<small>OD</small>'s own people?"

The Gibeonites answered him, "We have no claim for silver or gold against Saul and his household; and we have no claim on the life of anyone else in Israel." And [David] responded, "Whatever you say I will do for you." Thereupon they said to the king, "The man who massacred us and planned to exterminate us, so that we^{class="footnote-marker">a}<i class="footnote">exterminate us, so that we Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i> should not survive in all the territory of Israel—let seven of his male issue be handed over to us, and we will impale them before GOD in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of GOD."^b<i class="footnote">Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of GOD</small>Emendation yields "at Gibeon, on the mountain of GOD</small>" (cf. Septuagint and v. 9).</i> And the king replied, "I will do so." The king spared Mephibosheth son of Jonathan son of Saul, because of the oath before GOD between the two, between David and Jonathan son of Saul.

Instead, the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons that Rizpah daughter of Aiah bore to Saul, and the five sons that Merab^c<i class="footnote">Merab So two Heb. mss., many Septuagint mss., and Peshitta; and cf. Targum, Sanhedrin 19b, and 1 Sam. 18.19. Most mss. and the printed editions read "Michal."</i> daughter of Saul bore to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite,

and he handed them over to the Gibeonites. They impaled them on the mountain before GOD; all seven of them perished at the same time. They were put to death in the first days of the harvest, the beginning of the barley harvest.

Then Rizpah daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it on a rock for herself, and she stayed there from the beginning of the harvest until rain from the sky fell on the bodies;^d<i class="footnote">the bodies Heb. "them."</i> she did not let the birds of the sky settle on them by day or the wild beasts [approach] by night.

David was told what Saul's concubine Rizpah daughter of Aiah had done. And David went and took the bones of Saul and of his son Jonathan from the citizens of Jabesh-gilead, who had made off with them from the public square of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hung them up on the day the Philistines killed Saul at Gilboa.

He brought up the bones of Saul and of his son Jonathan from there; and he gathered the bones of those who had been impaled.

And they buried the bones of Saul and of his son Jonathan^e<i class="footnote">Jonathan Septuagint adds "and the bones of those impaled."</i> in Zela, in the territory of Benjamin, in the tomb of his father Kish. And when all that the king had commanded was done, God responded to the plea of the land thereafter.

Again war broke out between the Philistines and Israel, and David and the men with him went down and fought the Philistines; David grew weary, and Ishbi-benob^f<i class="footnote">Ishbi-benob Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i> tried to kill David.—He was a descendant of the Raphah;^g<i class="footnote">Raphah Apparently a race of giants.</i> his bronze spear weighed three hundred shekels and he wore new armor.—

But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to his aid; he attacked the Philistine and killed him. It was then that David's men declared to him on oath, "You shall not go with us into battle anymore, lest you extinguish the lamp of Israel!"

^h<i class="footnote">This paragraph is found also in 1 Chron. 20.4–8; in part, also in 1QSama, with some

variations.

After this, fighting broke out again with the Philistines, at Gob; that was when Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Saph, a descendant of the Raphah.ⁱ Apparently a race of giants.

Again there was fighting with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim^j Perhaps a duplicate of *'oregim* ("weavers") at the end of the verse; meaning of Heb. uncertain. 1 Chron. 20.5 reads "And Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi, the brother of Goliath the Gittite." the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite, whose spear had a shaft like a weaver's bar.

Once again there was fighting, at Gath. There was a giant of a man^k **a giant of a man** Following the *kethib*, in light of 1 Chron. 20.6; meaning of Heb. uncertain. Or "an adversary," following the *qere*; cf. Gersonides. who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in all; he too was descended from the Raphah. When he taunted Israel, Jonathan, the son of David's brother Shimei, killed him.

Those four were descended from the Raphah in Gath, and they fell by the hands of David and his men.

Chapter 22

^a This poem occurs again as Ps. 18, with a number of variations, some of which are cited in the following notes. David addressed the words of this song to GOD, after GOD had saved him from the hands of all his enemies and from the hands of Saul.

He said:
O
 ETERNAL One, my crag, my fortress, my deliverer!
O God, the rock
^b God, the rock
 Lit. "the God of my rock"; Ps. 18.3 "my God, my rock." in which I take shelter:
My shield, my mighty champion,
^c mighty champion Lit. "horn of rescue." my haven and refuge!
My savior, You who rescue me from violence!

All praise! I called on
 GOD ^d
^e All praise! I called on GOD
 Construction of Heb. uncertain.
And was delivered from my enemies.
For the breakers of Death encompassed me,
The torrents of Belial
^e ^f Belial I.e., the netherworld, like "Death" and "Sheol." terrified me;
The ropes of Sheol encircled me,
The snares of Death engulfed me.
In my anguish I called on the
 ETERNAL,
Cried out to my God,
Who from a heavenly abode
^f ^g a heavenly abode Lit. "His temple"; cf. v. 10. heard my voice,
Whose ears received my cry.

Then the earth rocked and
 quaked,
The foundations of
 heaven^g<i
 class="footnote">heaven Cf. Ps. 18.8 "mountains."</i> shook—

Rocked by divine indignation.
 Smoke went up from God's nostrils—

Devouring fire from God's
 mouth;
Live coals blazing
 forth.
 [God] bent the sky and came
 down,
Thick cloud beneath divine
 feet.
 [God] mounted a cherub and
 flew,
And was seen<sup
 class="footnote-marker">h</sup><i class="footnote">And was seen
 Cf. Ps. 18.11 "gliding."</i> on the wings of the wind.
 Pavilions of darkness all
 around,
Dripping clouds, huge
 thunderheads;
 In the divine brilliance
<span
 class="poetry indentAll">Blazed fiery coals.
 G<small>OD</small> thundered
 from heaven,
The Most High gave forth
 voice—
 Letting shafts fly, and scattering
 them;ⁱ<i
 class="footnote">them I.e., the enemies in v. 4.</i>
<span
 class="poetry indentAll">Lightning, and routing them.
 The bed of the sea was
 exposed,
The foundations of the
 world were laid bare
By
 the E<small>TERNAL</small>'s mighty roaring,
<span class="poetry
 indentAll">At the blast of God's breath.<sup class="footnote-
 marker">j</sup><i class="footnote">God's breath Lit. "the breath
 of His nostrils."</i>
 Reaching down from on high, [God] took
 me,
Drawing me out of the mighty
 waters^k<i
 class="footnote">mighty waters Cf. v. 5.</i>—
 Rescuing me from my fierce
 enemy,
From foes too strong for
 me.
 They attacked me on my day of
 calamity,
But
 G<small>OD</small> was my support.
 Bringing me out to
 freedom,
Pleased with me enough
 to rescue me.
 G<small>OD</small> rewarded me
 according to my merit,
Requiting the
 cleanness of my hands—
 For I have kept to the ways of
 G<small>OD</small>
And have not been
 guilty before my God;
 For I am mindful of all God's
 rules
And have not departed from
 God's laws.
 I have been blameless before
 [God],
And have guarded myself
 against sinning—

And G<small>OD</small> has
 requited my merit
According to my
 evident cleanness.

With the loyal, You deal
 loyally;
With the blameless
 hero,^l<i
 class="footnote">hero Cf. Ps. 18.26 "man."</i> blamelessly.
 With the pure, You act in
 purity,
And with the perverse,
 You are wily.

To lowly folk You give
 victory,
And You look with scorn
 on the haughty.^m<i
 class="footnote">And You look with scorn on the haughty Lit. "And
 lower Your eyes on the haughty"; Ps. 18.28 "But haughty eyes You
 humble."</i>

You, O E<small>TERNAL</small> One,
 are my lamp;
 G<small>OD</small>
 lights up my darkness.

With You, I can rush a barrier;<sup
 class="footnote-marker">n</sup><i class="footnote">barrier Cf.
 postbiblical <i>gedudiyoth</i> "walls," Aramaic <i>gudda</i>,
 "wall."</i>
With my God, I can scale a
 wall.

The way of God is perfect,
<span
 class="poetry indentAll">The word of the E<small>TERNAL</small>
 is pure.
[God] shields all who seek
 refuge.

Truly, who is a god except the
 E<small>TERNAL</small>,
Who is a rock
 except our God?—

The God, my mighty stronghold,<sup
 class="footnote-marker">o</sup><i class="footnote">my mighty
 stronghold Cf. Ps. 18.33 "who girded me with might."</i>
<span
 class="poetry indentAll">Who kept<sup class="footnote-
 marker">p</sup><i class="footnote">kept Meaning of Heb. uncertain;
 Ps. 18.33 "made."</i> my path secure;

Who made my legs like a
 deer's,
And set me firmly on
 the^q<i class="footnote">the
 Taking <i>bamothai</i> as a poetic form of <i>bamoth</i>; cf. Hab.
 3.19; in contrast to others "my."</i> heights;

Who trained my hands for battle—

My arms can bend a bow of
 bronze!

You have granted me the shield of Your
 protection
And Your providence
 has made me great.^r<i
 class="footnote">And Your providence has made me great Meaning of
 Heb. uncertain.</i>

You have let me stride on
 freely;
My feet have not
 slipped.

I pursued my enemies and wiped them
 out,
I did not turn back till I
 destroyed them.

I destroyed them, I struck them
 down;
They rose no more, they
 lay at my feet.

You have girded me with strength for battle,
Brought low my adversaries before me,
Made my enemies turn tail before me,
My foes—and I wiped them out.
They looked,^s *looked* Cf. Ps. 18.42 "cried out." but there was none to deliver;
To GOD, who did not answer them.
I pounded them like dust of the earth,
Stamped, crushed them like dirt of the streets.
You have rescued me from the strife of peoples,^t *peoples* So some mss. and the Septuagint; Tiberian Masoretic mss. and the printed editions "my people."
Kept me to be^u *Kept me to be* Cf. Ps. 18.44 "set me." at the head of nations;
Peoples I knew not must serve me.
Foreign peoples cringe before me,
Are submissive at the mere report of me.
Foreign peoples lose courage
And come trembling out of their strongholds.^v *And come trembling out of their strongholds*
Meaning of Heb. uncertain.
The ETERNAL lives! Blessed is my rock!
Exalted be God, the rock
Who gives me victory;
The God who has vindicated me
And made peoples subject to me,
Who rescued me from my enemies,
Who raised me clear of my adversaries,
Saved me from the lawless opposition!
For this I sing Your praise, ETERNAL One, among the nations
And hymn Your name:
Tower of victory^w *Tower of victory*
Kethib and Ps. 18.51 read "He accords wondrous victories." to Your^x *Your* Heb. 3rd person. king,
Keeping faith with Your^y *Your* See preceding note. anointed,
With David and his offspring evermore.

Chapter 23

These are the last words of David:
^a *Meaning of much of this poem (vv. 1-7) uncertain.*
The utterance of David son of Jesse,
The utterance of the man set on high,^b

class="footnote">set on high 4QSam^a reads "God raised up."</i>

The anointed of the God of
 Jacob,
The favorite of the songs
 of Israel:^c<i class="footnote">The favorite of the songs of Israel Or "The
 favorite of the Mighty One of Israel"; cf. Exod. 15.2. In contrast to
 others "The sweet singer of Israel."</i>
 The spirit of G<small>OD</small>
 has spoken through me,
God's message is
 on my tongue;
 The God of Israel has
 spoken,
The Rock of Israel said
 concerning me:
"He who rules
 over people justly,
He who rules
 in^d<i class="footnote">in
 So many Heb. mss. Most mss. and the printed editions lack "in."</i>
 awe of God
 Is like the light of morning at
 sunrise,
A morning without
 clouds-
Through sunshine and
 rain
[Bringing]<sup
 class="footnote-marker">e</sup><i class="footnote">Through sunshine
 and rain / [Bringing] Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i> vegetation out
 of the earth."
 Is not my House established before
 God?
For I have been granted an
 eternal pact,
Drawn up in full
 and secured.
Will [God] not
 cause all my success
And [my]
 every desire to blossom?
 But the wicked shall all
<span
 class="poetry indentAll">Be raked aside like thorns;
<span
 class="poetry indentAll">For no one will take them in his hand.
 Whoever touches them
<span
 class="poetry indentAll">Must arm himself with iron
<span
 class="poetry indentAll">And the shaft of a spear;
<span
 class="poetry indentAll">And they must be burned up on the
 spot.

 These are the names^f<i class="footnote">A number of these names, with variations, are found in 1
 Chron. 11 and 27.</i> of David's warriors: Josheb-basshebeth, a
 Tahchemonite, the chief officer—he is Adino the Eznite; [he wielded his
 spear]^g<i class="footnote">[he
 wielded his spear] Preserved in 1 Chron. 11.11; similarly some
 Septuagint mss. of 2 Sam.</i> against eight hundred and slew them<sup
 class="footnote-marker">h</sup><i class="footnote">and slew them
 Lit. "slain."</i> on one occasion.
 Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodo son of Ahohi. He was one of the three
 warriors with David when they defied the Philistines gathered there for
 battle. Israel's force retreated,
 but he held his ground. He struck down Philistines until his arm grew
 tired and his hand stuck to his sword; and G<small>OD</small> wrought a
 great victory that day. Then the troops came back to him—but only to
 strip [the slain].
 Next to him was Shammah son of Age the Ararite. The Philistines had
 gathered in forceⁱ<i class="footnote">in force Meaning of Heb. uncertain.</i> where
 there was a plot of ground full of lentils; and the troops fled from the
 Philistines.

But [Shammah] took his stand in the middle of the plot and defended it, and he routed the Philistines. Thus GOD wrought a great victory.

Once, during the harvest,^j*Once, during the harvest* Meaning of Heb. uncertain. three of the thirty chiefs went down to David at the cave^k*cave* See note at 1 Sam. 22.1. of Adullam, while a force of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim.

David was then in the stronghold,^l*the stronghold* See note at 1 Sam. 22.1. and a Philistine garrison was then at Bethlehem.

David felt a craving and said, "If only I could get a drink of water from the cistern that is by the gate of Bethlehem!"

So the three warriors got through the Philistine camp and drew water from the cistern that is by the gate of Bethlehem, and they carried it back. But when they brought it to David he would not drink it, and he poured it out as a libation to GOD.

For he said, "GOD forbid that I should do this! Can [I drink]^m*[I drink]* So Septuagint and 1 Chron. 11.19. the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?" So he would not drink it. Such were the exploits of the three warriors.

Abishai, the brother of Joab son of Zeruiah, was head of another three.ⁿ*another three* Two Heb. mss. and Syriac read "the thirty"; cf. vv. 23-24. He once wielded his spear against three hundred and slew them.^o*and slew them* Meaning of Heb. uncertain.

He won a name among the three;^p*three* Emendation yields "thirty." since he was the most highly regarded among the three,^q*three* See previous note. he became their leader. However, he did not attain to the three.

Benaiah son of Jehoiada, from Kabzeel, was a brave soldier^r*a brave soldier* Heb. "the son of a brave soldier." who performed great deeds. He killed the two [sons] of Ariel of Moab.^s*He killed the two [sons] of Ariel of Moab* Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Once, on a snowy day, he went down into a pit and killed a lion.

He also killed an Egyptian,^t*an Egyptian* Or "an Egyptian opponent." a huge^u*huge* Meaning of Heb. uncertain. 1 Chron. 11.23 reads "a giant of a man." man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand, yet [Benaiah] went down against him with a club, wrenched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear.

Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada; and he won a name among the three^v*three* See first note at v. 19. warriors. He was highly regarded among the thirty, but he did not attain to the three. David put him in charge of his bodyguard.^w*bodyguard* Meaning of Heb. uncertain.

Among the thirty were Asahel, the brother of Joab; Elhanan son of Dodo [from] Bethlehem, Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite, Helez the Paltite, Ira son of Ikkesh from Tekoa, Abiezer of Anathoth, Mebunnai the Hushathite,

Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite,
 Heleb son of Baanah the Netophathite, Ittai son of Ribai from Gibeah of
 the Benjaminites,
 Benaiah of Pirathon, Hiddai of Nahale-gaash,
 Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite,
 Eliahba of Shaalbon, sons of Jashen, Jonathan,<sup class="footnote-
 marker">x</sup><i class="footnote">Jashen, Jonathan Meaning of
 Heb. uncertain.</i>
 Shammah the Ararite, Ahiam son of Sharar the Ararite,
 Eliphelet son of Ahasbai son of the Maacathite, Eliam son of Ahithophel
 the Gilonite,
 Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite,
 Igal son of Nathan from Zobah, Bani the Gadite,
 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite—the arms-bearer of Joab son of
 Zeruah—
 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite,
 Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all.<sup class="footnote-
 marker">y</sup><i class="footnote">thirty-seven in all Septuagint
 and 1 Chron. 11 differ from the foregoing lists in vv. 8-38, and from
 each other in the number and forms of the names.</i>

Chapter 24

^a<i class="footnote">This passage is
 also found, with some variations, in 1 Chron. 21.1-26.</i>
 G<small>OD</small>'s anger again^b<i class="footnote">again Cf. above 21.1-14.</i> flared up against
 Israel; and [God] incited David against them, saying, "Go and number
 Israel and Judah."
 The king said to Joab, his army commander,<sup class="footnote-
 marker">c</sup><i class="footnote">his army commander Cf. 1 Chron.
 21.2 "and to the officers of the army"; below, v. 4.</i> "Make the rounds
 of all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, and take a census of
 the people, so that I may know the size of the population."
 Joab answered the king, "May the E<small>TERNAL</small> your God increase
 the number of the people a hundredfold, while your own eyes see it! But
 why should my lord king want this?"
 However, the king's command to Joab and to the officers of the army
 remained firm; and Joab and the officers of the army set out, at the
 king's behest, to take a census of the people of Israel.
 They crossed the Jordan and encamped at Aroer, on the right side of the
 town, which is in the middle of the wadi of Gad, and<sup class="footnote-
 marker">d</sup><i class="footnote">encamped at Aroer, on the right
 side of the town, which is ... Gad, and Some Septuagint mss. read
 "began at Aroer, and from the town, which is ... Gad, they."</i> [went on]
 to Jazer.
 They continued to Gilead and to the region of Tahtim-hodshi, and they
 came to Dan-jaan and around to^e<i class="footnote">Tahtim-hodshi ... and around to Meaning of Heb.
 uncertain.</i> Sidon.
 They went onto the fortress of Tyre and all the towns of the Hivites and
 Canaanites, and finished at Beer-sheba in southern Judah.
 They traversed the whole country, and then they came back to Jerusalem at
 the end of nine months and twenty days.
 Joab reported to the king the number of the people that had been
 recorded: in Israel there were 800,000 soldiers ready to draw the sword,
 and Judah's contingent numbered 500,000.
 But afterward David reproached himself<sup class="footnote-
 marker">f</sup><i class="footnote">reproached himself See note at
 1 Sam. 24.6.</i> for having numbered the people. And David said to

GOD, "I have sinned grievously in what I have done. Please, O GOD, remit the guilt of Your servant, for I have acted foolishly."

When David rose in the morning, the word of GOD had come to the prophet Gad, David's seer:

"Go and tell David, 'Thus said GOD: I hold three things over you; choose one of them, and I will bring it upon you.'"

Gad came to David and told him; he asked, "Shall a seven-year famine come upon you in the land, or shall you be in flight from your adversaries for three months while they pursue you, or shall there be three days of pestilence in your land? Now consider carefully what reply I shall take back to the One who sent me."

David said to Gad, "I am in great distress.^g*in great distress* Or "deeply distressed." Let us fall into the hands of GOD, whose compassion is great; and let me not fall into human hands."^h*Septuagint adds "So David chose the pestilence. It was the time of the wheat harvest."*

GOD sent a pestilence upon Israel from morning until the set time;ⁱ*until the set time* Meaning of Heb. uncertain. and 70,000 of the people died, from Dan to Beer-sheba.

But when the angel^j*angel* Lit. "messenger." extended a hand against Jerusalem to destroy it, GOD renounced further punishment and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "Enough! Stay your hand!" The angel of GOD was then by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to GOD, "I alone am guilty, I alone have done wrong; but these poor sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand fall upon me and my father's house!"

Gad came to David the same day and said to him, "Go and set up an altar to GOD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." David went up, following Gad's instructions, as GOD had commanded.

Araunah looked out and saw the king and his courtiers approaching him.^k*4QSam^a and 1 Chron. 21.20 add "Araunah (Ornan) was threshing wheat."* So Araunah went out and bowed low to the king, with his face to the ground.

And Araunah asked, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" David replied, "To buy the threshing floor from you, that I may build an altar to GOD and that the plague against the people may be checked."

And Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take it and offer up whatever he sees fit. Here are oxen for a burnt offering, and the threshing boards and the gear of the oxen for wood.

All this, O king,^l*O king* Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Araunah gives to Your Majesty. And may the ETERNAL your God," Araunah added, "respond to you with favor!"

But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I will buy them from you at a price. I cannot sacrifice to the ETERNAL my God burnt offerings that have cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

And David built there an altar to GOD and sacrificed burnt offerings and offerings of well-being. GOD responded to the plea for the land, and the plague against Israel was checked.